UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.96/INF.177
23 September 1993

Original: ENGLISH

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Forty-Fourth session

INFORMATION NOTE ON PARINAC
(UNHCR/NGO PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION)

I. BACKGROUND

1. As foreseen in its statute, UNHCR has worked in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) throughout the world over the past four decades. This operational partnership has been an essential aspect of the international response to the global refugee problem and has involved all aspects of this response. Today, NGOs provide a significant proportion of the global resources dedicated to refugees and returnees, and an increasingly large percentage of UNHCR's budget is also channelled through NGO partners.

2. The much increased needs for concerted humanitarian action worldwide, particularly for uprooted populations in conflict and post-conflict situations, have shown clearly that this UNHCR/NGO partnership needs to be strengthened and promoted. New internal and ethnic conflicts in the post-Cold War era have highlighted the necessity for improved collaboration between all parties -- Governments, United Nations agencies, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations -- to respond more effectively to the resulting humanitarian needs of affected populations. For this to be possible, the United Nations agencies and concerned NGOs must agree upon a well-integrated collaborative effort, characterized by improved two-way communication and understanding, as well as recognition of the different roles and potential of each. This effort would aim to maximize the capacity of all concerned, while benefiting from international as well as regional and local perspectives and resources.

GE.93-02535

II. OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA OF PARINAC

3. The UNHCR/NGO Partnership in Action (PARINAC) process is intended to facilitate closer practical collaboration and enhanced understanding between UNHCR and NGOs in order to produce improved operational results in the field. This should ultimately provide a greater combined capacity to respond to the global refugee problem, in all of its aspects, as part of the overall international humanitarian response in conflict or post-conflict situations.

4. The specific objectives of the PARINAC process are to:

(a) improve all aspects of collaboration and to broaden understanding between UNHCR and NGOs in key areas of protection, care, advocacy, prevention and solutions for refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the post-Cold War era;

(b) improve the infrastructure and capacity of local NGOs, particularly national organizations in developing countries and former Eastern bloc countries, and to strengthen UNHCR/NGO networks both regionally and internationally;

(c) agree upon regional and global objectives, action plans and strategies and to produce guidelines for a common agenda for responding to all aspects of the refugee problem; and

(d) improve mutual programming between UNHCR and NGOs with a view to maximizing effectiveness in the use of available resources for the care and protection of refugees, returnees and, as appropriate, displaced persons.

5. To this end, the PARINAC agenda addresses the totality of the refugee issue from preventive action, exodus and relief to return, reintegration and development, including promotion of solutions and advocacy. Four issues, reflecting overriding concerns in these areas, provide the starting point for discussion: Protection, Internally Displaced Persons, Emergency Response and the Continuum from Relief and Rehabilitation to Development. In these discussions particular attention will be paid to questions of implementation procedures; the special situation of refugee women and children; refugees and the environment; and building the capacity of local NGOs.

III. THE PROCESS

6. In 1991 UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) began global consultations on the criteria, precepts and strategies for defining future UNHCR/NGO partnerships. These consultations resulted in the issue of a basic reference document on this partnership in February 1992.

7. PARINAC is the next, broader step in this process, which is intended to lead to an agreed global action plan for the concerted implementation of the

operational principles agreed upon. It will provide regional and international fora for an intensified dialogue between NGOs and UNHCR, with a view to determining the complementary roles of each in order to meet the current global humanitarian challenge. The success of this process will ultimately be judged by the practical results of improved collaboration in the field.

8. The PARINAC process is made up of six regional meetings leading to a global conference to be held in June 1994 in Oslo. The first of the regional meetings was held in June 1993 in Caracas and is to be followed by further regional meetings in Kathmandu, Tunis, Bangkok, Addis Ababa and Budapest. It is intended that proposals from these consultations will form the basis of the overall declaration and plan of action to be adopted in Oslo. At the same time, each regional consultation is itself intended to lead to improved and closer efforts between NGOs and UNHCR in each region.

IV. CONCLUSION

9. PARINAC is an ambitious undertaking to bring together UNHCR and hundreds of NGO representatives at local, regional and international levels to identify common objectives and actions. The ambition of the project is, however, commensurate with the dimension of the problems at hand. If the global refugee phenomenon is to be addressed systematically and effectively in the coming years in the broader context of international humanitarian action, it is essential that all possible resources be coherently mobilized for this undertaking. Part of the outcome of the process -- increased understanding and education on both sides -- will be less tangible but is an essential aspect of the process, if not an easily quantifiable one. Parallel to this, PARINAC must also produce concrete improvements in future UNHCR/NGO action, in order to ensure the best possible use of scarce resources at a time of growing demand for humanitarian action on behalf of uprooted populations in all regions.